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Quacks Overrun North Harlem District

Fake Medicine, "Charms" and "Spells" Are Dis- pensed at High Prices

By Lester A. Walton

NORTH HARLEM is overrun with quacks who are reaping a financial harvest by playing on the credulity of the ignorant and superstitious.

Roots, herbs, salves, "love potions" and numerous liquid concoctions are being sold at an enormous profit to the gullible, many of whom are in ill health.

So menacing has become this form of exploitation that the North Harlem Medical Society, an organization of Negro physicians, has appointed a vigilance committee to investigate quackery and co-operate with the legal branch of the City Health Department in stamping out the illegal practice of medicine in the community.

Several Arrests And Convictions

Since the campaign was inaugurated to run out of Harlem quacks of every description, several arrests and convictions have been made. The most conspicuous case was that of a woman spiritualist who had amassed a good-sized bank roll selling for \$25 a six-ounce bottle containing water and tincture of assafoetida. So remunerative was her practice that she lived in an elaborately furnished apartment on Seventh Avenue, employed a retinue of servants, including a chauffeur, and owned a Cadillac car.

A Spaniard was caught practicing medicine without a license. He was sentenced to imprisonment and then deported.

Quacks who have been finding North Harlem a most fertile field for their activities are divided into four groups. There is the street corner type, which adds a touch of the theatrical to extricate quarters, fifty-cent pieces and dollars from interested onlookers. As a rule they are either white fakers posing as American Indians, or native West Indians, representing themselves as East Indians. Somehow the attention and imagination of the crowd on the street are arrested and fired by Indian characters.

Successful street-corner quacks know more about the psychology of the public than they do about medicine. To quickly collect an audience they array themselves in gay costumes, use an

open touring car as a stage and proceed to dispense rhythmic melody from his story.

While the music is playing and all rapt attention, the leader of the aggregation begins eloquently to tell of the wonderful curative value for which his liquid medicine is internationally famous. The spectators, with necks craned so as not to miss a syllable, are informed, in a patronizing manner they can buy a bottle for \$1—not a cent less.

To the tempo of the exotic music from the stringed orchestra and the verbal blandishments of the "learned doctor," a touching scene is enacted in which dollars are exchanged for medicine not worth three cents a bottle.

When there is a lull in the flow of dollars, the chief actor in the drama assumes a sympathetic attitude. Observing that there are some in the crowd greatly in need of the medicine but who are short of funds, in the interest of humanity a great concession will be made. Half a dozen bottles will be sold at a sacrifice—the marvelous sum of 50 cents! A goodly number, overwhelmed by this act of charitable consideration, gratefully separate themselves from their hard-earned cash.

Most open-air quacks represent themselves as graduates of medical schools in South America. They have on display charts and anatomical specimens, and speak fluently on physiology and of the ramification of germs. They pose as expert diagnosticians and have the temerity to pick out some one and say: "I know what's the matter with you." Now and then they guess rightly.

Guaranteed to
Cure Everything

The medicine bought by the public is guaranteed to cure everything from ingrown toenails to tuberculosis. The vender, bubbling over with self-assurance and a self-conceit, offers to give any one \$25 in refutation of his claims relative to the potency of his medicine.

There are a dozen such quacks who make regular and profitable excursions on the pocketbooks of North Harlem. Many more are of the transient variety. The largest financial returns from quackery are made by those who, under the guise of spiritualism, enjoy a most lucrative sideline treating people for chronic diseases. This type is no piker, charging from \$25 up for a small bottle of medicine or box of salve.

The victims, in the main, are either neurotic persons or those suffering with a loss of skin pigmentation. They are made believe their affliction is due to a spell cast on them by some erstwhile lover or enemy—past or present. One case recently unearthed by North Harlem physicians was that of an upholsterer who had contracted eczema. He had no organic trouble. In a fit of despondency he consulted a spiritualist and was convinced that machinations had been contrived against him years ago. He was sold a bottle of medicine for \$25 and given assurance the malevolent spell would be broken.

Eczema has periods of abatement. The spots on the upholsterer's hands disappeared. He thought himself well and attributed his recovery to the spiritualist. But weeks later, when he suffered a recurrence of his skin trou-

The spiritualist who practices quackery does not charge for consultation. This is given upon recommendation.

A third type of quack is made up of men who have had a smattering of medicine, secured as clerk or porter in a drug store. In a secretive manner they refer to themselves as doctors and carry cards as such. Small and unpretentious offices are maintained in hideaway places. They write no prescriptions but have on hand boxes of salve, costing \$1, and mixtures of different kinds.

They manufacture on a large scale a lotion whose chief ingredient is menthol. It is soothing, harmless, not banned by law, and is given the patient as a positive cure for skin and other diseases.

Active in Exposing Quackery Methods

The fourth group to take advantage of the public consists of men licensed in medicine or pharmacy, but who have failed to study and keep up with the times. In diagnosing a case they have no hesitancy in telling a patient anything to get the money. Down in their hearts they know they are not prescribing for the best interests of the sick person, but they do not care.

One physician is said to have gotten into disrepute for having prescribed a red plaster for every patient. A pharmacist was caught examining the sick in the rear of his store, where he compounded prescriptions for them and officiated in the dual capacity of physician and druggist.

Dr. Lucien M. Brown of No. 2460 Seventh Avenue, a member of the North Harlem Medical Society, has been one of the most active in exposing quackery. He points out that the monetary loss is not the only major consideration involved. That while the concoctions sold do not seriously affect the health, there is often grave danger of some victims greatly in need of immediate medical attention putting his life in the hands of a quack instead of a bona-fide physician, with disastrous consequences.

COUPLE KILL OLD WOMAN TO END 'WITCH'S SPELL'

Chicago Tribune
7/20/29
Feared She'd Make Daughter Die.

BY JAMES DOHERTY.

Kalamazoo, Mich., July 19.—[Special.]—The Burgess family of Kalamazoo were good people, good neighbors, kindly folk, but father and mother believed Mrs. Etta L. Fairchild, 76 years old, resident of the Nerrel Home for the Aged here, had the "evil eye" and held a malign control over their lives. So they killed her last night.

Today Eugene Burgess, 54; Mrs. Pearl Burgess, 50; Burnett, 27, and Miss Eugenia, 17, are in the county jail and the body of Mrs. Fairchild, head crushed, nine ribs fractured, right arm cracked, was taken from a deep cistern. The father and mother confessed, and absolved their children of complicity. Mrs. Burgess, Eugenia, and Mrs. Fairchild were believers in faith healing, and Mrs. Fairchild was considered something of a religious fanatic.

"Had to Kill Her."

Burgess, however, belonged to no sect and had no particular beliefs. "I had to kill her," Burgess explained to Sheriff Borden. "She had put a spell on us. She could kill a person by merely wishing it. She could command a person's heart to stop, and it would stop."

Mrs. Burgess was firmly of the opinion Mrs. Fairchild had all the powers of witchcraft, so she told the sheriff. She said the slain woman was a hypnotist and gave her orders by mental telepathy.

Until fourteen years ago the Burgesses and the widow Fairchild were next door neighbors. Mrs. Fairchild's husband, a minister, died in 1904. The

widow continued to live alone in the family home. She was childless, intensely religious and had an abnormal fondness for cats. Several years ago she gave up housekeeping and entered the Merrill infirmary to live out her days. She occasionally would visit her old neighbors, the Burgesses. She was childless, and besides religion her chief interest was in cats. Burgess finally objected to Mrs. Fairchild's visits, saying she argued religion with his wife until Mrs. Burgess became hysterical.

Friend Tips Off Police.

The weird murder was called to the attention of the authorities by a woman friend of Mrs. Burgess who had been told of the killing.

The sheriff, Police Chief Carney, and Commissioner Fleming went to the Burgess home shortly before midnight. They found blood stains all over the house.

"Yes, I killed her," said Burgess, clammy. "You gentlemen can't know how I feel in this matter. Why Mrs. Fairchild could kill any one in this room with a look. She could make you have any kind of a disease. She caused my mother's death two years ago. She has killed a hundred people in Kalamazoo, including her husband."

Mrs. Burgess vigorously nodded assent.

"She was getting ready to kill us," added the motherly looking woman, whose hair is just turning gray. "She was working on my husband, making his heart beat unnaturally, and we had to kill her or be killed. She killed three ladies at the Merrill home lately. She asked if she couldn't come and live with us."

"Now Every One Is Safe."

"You were threatened?" Sheriff Borden asked.

"Exactly," Mrs. Burgess answered. "Now she is dead and every one in Kalamazoo is safe."

"She had the evil eye," Burgess said. "We feared her. We feared she intended to kill Eugenia by means of her mysterious will power."

Eugenia, the father said, had been ill since Mrs. Fairchild last visited the Burgess home.

Mrs. Burgess said she received telepathic messages whenever Mrs. Fairchild was coming to visit her and she always sent her daughter away. She had this premonition yesterday, she told police, and sent Eugenia to visit a neighbor.

Coming to the Burgess home in mid-afternoon, the widow said she would wait the return of Eugenia.

Murder Decided On.

Burgess and his wife, according to their confession, then asked her to stay for dinner, deciding to keep Eugenia away and kill Mrs. Fairchild. The murder was carried out while the three sat at the dinner table.

"I walked up behind her with a lead pipe in one hand and a hammer in the other," Burgess said. "I hit her once and she fell forward on the table. Then I dragged her to the living room and finished the job."

"We got a rug from the bedroom and tied her in that. We put the hammer and lead pipe in a bag and fastened the bag to the rug and then we tied a 75 pound cement block to her feet and dropped her into the cistern in the back of the house."

Burgess also threw a blood soaked rug and other clothing down the well and burned his own shirt.

Eugenia came home later and went to bed without knowing anything about the killing, the parents said.

Police Blame Wife.

The authorities believe Mrs. Burgess instigated the killing. Their investigation showed that several persons mentioned by Mrs. Burgess as having been "killed" by Mrs. Fairchild, died natural deaths. They found no other person who those Mrs. Fairchild possessed any occult or psychic powers.

Those who knew the dead woman said she never claimed any clairvoyant or spiritualistic achievements. She was just a "motherly old soul," small and bent with age, who liked to talk about religion, who had great faith in mental healing but was never a practitioner herself. Her affection was lavished on cats, and when she couldn't have any in the institution, she filled her room with pictures of them.

Burgess was described as a kindly, generous man, a skilled laborer at an automobile factory. He was popular, but Mrs. Burgess was not a woman who made friends, and ordinarily she had little to say.

The son, Burnett, is married and lives across the street. He said his father told him last night he had killed a woman and he was too shocked to advise his father or notify the police. He didn't help dispose of the body, he said.

The mother and father will be arraigned tomorrow, but no charges are anticipated against the son or daughter.

'SPELL' LED MAN TO KILL, HE SAYS

Michigan Couple Held In Death Of Aged Woman 'Feared Evil Eyes'

KALAMAZOO, MICH., July 19.—(AP) Admitting they killed Mrs. Etta L. Fairchild, because they feared the effect of her "evil eye" on their 17-year-old daughter, Eugene Burgess, 54, and his wife, Pearl, were being held on a charge of murder here today.

They were arrested last night after officers, called to the home on a "tip" discovered a blood-spattered living room and later found the body of the woman in the cistern back of the house.

Court action against the Burgesses has been held up pending questioning of their son, Burnett, by Prosecutor Paul M. Tedrow, to determine whether the youth was in the house when the crime was committed and took part in the slaying.

In his confession Burgess coolly revealed an amazing belief in spells and latter-day witchcraft reminiscent of the recent "Hex" murders in the vicinity of York, Pa.

Burgess and his wife blamed Mrs. Fairchild for the ill health of their daughter, Eugenie, and also for a spell under which they believed the entire family to be laboring. Yesterday, when Mrs. Fairchild called at the Burgess home they said she boasted of a "mental power" to annihilate whomever she chose. They said she told them she had killed more than 100 persons a year for the past 25 years. Mrs. Burgess said the woman had a long list of persons she claimed were victims of her "evil eye," including her husband and prominent Kalamazoo citizens.

Burgess is said to have told officers he came on the woman from behind as she was eating dinner at their home last night and beat her with a lead pipe and a hammer. Following this he and his wife wrapped the body in a rug, weighted it and threw it into the cistern, he said.

Sinister Shadows of Voodooism Hover Over Grocer's Mystery Death

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J., July 13.—Black magis and voodooism of the sort practiced in the back reaches of the Congo, cast a deper shadow today about the mysterious death of Joseph London, wealthy grocer. Since the charred body was found last week in the ruins of his home in Conoverton, near here, police have not rejected the theory that he was murdered.

Time and again they have ques-

tioned Flossie London, 24-year-old second wife of the grocer, regarding her friendship for Otto Martin, 45, a mulatto.

But, this morning pressed by Frank J. Harrold, chief of county detectives, the woman admitted that Martin, a priest of voodooism, had practiced his strange rites over her. He controlled her thoughts and her actions, she said, by holding her under a spell.

Later in the day a meeting between Martin and Mrs. London was arranged, in the office of Chief of Police Schefflein in Abeccon, where Martin lives. Confronted by the mulatto the woman stuck to her story about black magic, but Martin flew into a rage and shouted:

"She's a liar. You can see she's a liar!"

A rift in Mrs. London's story appeared when Martin admitted that he visited the London premises about 7 o'clock on the night of June 26—the night of the fire that either killed the grocer or concealed his assassination.

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WITCHCRAFT IN AFRICA.

It must be somewhat difficult for the British to administer all their African mandates in such a manner as to strike a mean between British ideals of justice and native traditions and beliefs. It takes more than even a fairly-rounded English education to eradicate these beliefs from the minds of the Negroes. The following extracts are taken from a Gold Coast newspaper, which in diction is usually almost correct, although often betraying the love of the Africans for high-sounding words and phrases which they do not quite know how to use:

On one fine evening of last month Mr. Oclo of Customs was visited by a friend with whom he passed the evening joyfully till late in the night when it happened that he must accompany him halfway to his house which is situated on the bank of the Keta lagoon. On approaching the premises his friend whom he knew to be Mr. Croyden started struggling with him but he looked it as play till it became strong that he was obliged to defend himself but in the event of the seriousness of his defence his friend turned to be a very big crocodile and after giving him some scratches threw itself into the lagoon.

This is said to have taken place because of being cursed by his wife whom he despatched her home with no ill intention but who took it otherwise and cursed him to a certain river that he must be caught by a crocodile which took the form of his own best friend Mr. Croyden to make his accomplishment a success.

An accident occurred on the 18th June resulting in the instant death of one Ayaa of Attoabrakrome, a village 27 miles off Enchi, who was shot dead at night by her own father

Attobrah. It is alleged that the father went that evening hunting in his farm, to shoot the animals destroying his cocoa pods. On entering the farm he espied a porcupine in front of him and he did not hesitate to fire. But unfortunately the animal in question cried, "Father you have killed me!" and to his intense surprise Attobrah found his daughter lying dead. It is said that the victim was a witchcraft and assumed the form of a porcupine to devour the cocoa pods.

The father reported himself to the police and was brought to Enchi with the dead body which was buried on the 19th.

If educated Africans accept such stories as routine news items, it is obviously a delicate matter to prosecute crimes of violence as they would be prosecuted under English methods of criminal jurisprudence. Concessions have to be made to the native viewpoint and it may be recalled that mention was made in these columns some time ago of an acquittal where the defense was based on a witchcraft delusion which the victim had worked on the murderer.

ALLEGED "HEX" SLAYER HANGS SELF IN JAIL

Kalamazoo, Mich., September 24.—

(P)—Eugene Burgess, 53, who with his wife Pearl, was charged with the "hex" murder of Mrs. Etta L. Fairchild, 83, hanged himself in his cell in the county jail early today. Both Burgess and his wife were scheduled to go on trial with the next two weeks.

The Burgessses visited Mrs. Fairchild to their house last summer and then beat her to death, throwing her body into a well. They confessed the slaying, telling authorities they had feared the reputed power of the aged woman's "evil eye." Mrs. Fairchild, they said, was responsible for casting a "spell" over their daughter, Eugene.

IN MICHIGAN WITCHCRAFT CASE



Eugene Burgess (left) and his wife (right) are alleged to have confessed killing Mrs. Etta L. Fairchild at Kalamazoo, Mich., claiming that the aged woman cast a "spell" over their daughter (inset).

Witch Doctors of Africa Have Astonishing Powers

YALE PROFESSOR TELLS OF STRANGE CURES

New Haven, Conn., September 29.

(P)—Astonishing powers of African witch doctors, including telepathy, are reported by G. F. Cooper, of Yale, who has just returned from a year in the forests of Liberia, West Africa.

He is field assistant in tropical forest at Yale and went to Africa for the late Forest Service in co-operation with the Firestone Plantations Company.

"The customs, superstitions and beliefs of the African natives," he says, "are so weird and unlike western world habits and ideas that the white man is at first inclined to belittle the black man's jujus, charms and sacrifices. Closer contact with the natives, and participation in some of their plays and secret rites soon brings a change of opinion and a feeling of astonishment and wonder. These men, and certain 'zoe' women, know the uses and values of every plant in the forest.

"They apparently are well versed in the profession of herbalists, and while

some of their concoctions are obviously psychological cures only, yet others have a definite therapeutic value.

"There are some remarkable stories of the ability of the bush doctors to hypnotize not only their own subjects, but strange white men as well. More than one white man has seen leopards and elephants 'at the direction of the doctor' when in reality none existed within the range of vision.

The relaying of information by way of fast runners or drum has been used for years, but other information just as detailed and accurate is sent by mental telepathy from one bush doctor to another of his craft many miles away."

Accused Of Voodooism Cremation

Denies Charges Made by the Wife
Wealthy White Grocer

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J., July 8—With a web of circumstantial evidence being woven about him in the alleged burning to death of a wealthy white grocer in voodooistic rites, Otto Martin, 45 years old, has come forth in strong denial of the charges. The accusations of the 29-year old wife of the dead man have caused police to hold Martin in spite of his pleading innocent.

Says She Was Under Spell
When the charred body of the grocer Joseph London, was found in the ruins of his home in Conventon near here, police fell up the theory that his death was not accident but that he had been slain. They questioned the wife of the dead man, Flossie London, as to her friendship with Martin but could get nothing from her Saturday morning when pressed by Chief of County Detectives Frank J. Harold, however, she broke down and confessed that Martin was a priest voodooism and had practiced his strange rites over her. She said that he cast a spell over her and controlled her thoughts and actions.

Martin Denies Charge
When brought before Martin in the office of the Chief of Police to find minerals, a dream book interprets your dreams, a fortune-teller book forecasts your future. All or any of this hokum, buncombe, fraud and hocus pocus may be had for \$2.48, each packet. Some day the government, instead of barring birth control literature from the mails, will spend some time in looking into the catalogues of the good old U.S.A. swindling modern artists who freely ply their good luck chain business with the aid of Uncle Sam. And the next traveller who returns from abroad with stories of African witchcraft, should be given a copy of the R. C. Adams catalogue Africa has nothing to equal it.

ored in which the grocer lost his life.

Louis Lodovio, a private detective investigating the case, said that London took out an insurance policy for \$10,000 about six months before his death. Aaron London Atlantic City druggist, son of his father had at least \$25,000 in life insurance, but thus far he had been able to account for only \$22,000.

Voodoo

Laugh about voodoo, medicine-men and witch doctors in Haiti, Jamaica or West Africa and then listen to Chief Magistrate McAdoo of New York warn against magic swindles in America's largest city.

A New York political club last week paid for a miraculous powder which was to be sprinkled on the floor of its meeting room.

A victim of seven curses could not raise \$400 demanded by a fortune-teller and remains uncured.

Through "spirit contact" a woman was induced to invest her life-time savings in a fake chicken farm and New York gold mine. Police got her money back. A woman paid \$50 for a good-luck rabbit foot, and so it goes.

And this very week comes a press dispatch from Malden, Massachusetts—Massachusetts, mind you—which tells of 10,000 pilgrims visiting the grave of a certain priest there, in one day, seeking health for themselves and their relatives. The AFRO received a catalogue this week from R. C. Adams company, a Chicago white firm. It offers to sell:

A mystic powder and love perfume to attract your loved one for \$1.98;

A "John-the-Conqueror" root bag, ring, King Solomon wisdom-stone, loadstone bag, rabbit foot, or black cat bag, guaranteed to help you get a job, rent a room, fascinate, attract, win in anything, pep you up, dye gray hair or make you beautiful.

A Jacob's rod is advertised to tell you where to find minerals, a dream book interprets your dreams, a fortune-teller book forecasts your future.

All or any of this hokum, buncombe, fraud and hocus pocus may be had for \$2.48, each packet.

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